

II INTRODUCTION TO RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

This third volume of the NASA Ames Development Plan Final Programmatic EIS responds to comments received on the Draft Programmatic EIS (DPEIS). This chapter provides an overview of the responses to comments and the environmental impact review process.

A. Purpose and Overview of Volume Three

Volume 3 of this Final Programmatic EIS has been prepared as an addition to the DPEIS for the NASA Ames Development Plan (NADP). As required by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a Final EIS must contain responses to all substantive comments received during the public review period for a Draft EIS. A list of commentors on the NADP DPEIS is presented in Chapter 12. Copies of all written comments received are reproduced in Chapter 13, as are the transcripts of the public comment portions of each public hearing. In addition, responses to all comments are presented in Chapter 13. Where a response requires revisions to the DPEIS, these revisions have been incorporated into Volumes 1 and 2 of the Final Programmatic EIS and/or the appendices, and are referenced by page number in the responses to comments.

B. Environmental Review Process

According to NEPA, lead agencies are required to consult with federal agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise on the proposed action. In addition, the Council of Environmental Quality NEPA Guidelines encourage federal agencies to identify state and local cooperating agencies that have jurisdiction by law or special expertise on the proposed action. As well, they are required to solicit appropriate information from the public during EIS preparation. After completion of the Draft EIS, the lead agency must provide public notice of the availability of the Draft EIS to interested persons and agencies. These agencies and individuals are welcome to submit comments on the Draft EIS during the public review period, which must be at least a 45-day period. A Final EIS is prepared to respond to those comments received on the

Draft EIS and to clarify any errors, omissions, or misinterpretation of discussion of findings in the Draft EIS.

The DPEIS for the NADP project was made available for public review on November 26, 2001. The DPEIS was distributed to federal, local and State responsible and trustee agencies. The general public was advised of the availability of the DPEIS through public notice as required by law. Federal Register notices were published by NASA on November 26, 2001 and on December 10, 2001 by EPA. In addition, notices were published in the San Jose Mercury News (November 25 and December 2, 7 and 9, 2001), the La Oferta Review (November 30 and December 7, 2001), the Sunnyvale Sun (December 5, 2001), the Mountain View Voice and the Palo Alto Daily News (November 28 and 30, 2001). A meeting was held to brief Ames employees and to obtain comments on December 3, 2001. Public meetings to receive comments on the DPEIS were held on December 10, 11, 12 and 13, 2001 at Ames Research Center, the City of Sunnyvale and the City of Mountain View. The public comment period on the NADP DPEIS was extended for five days beyond the mandated 45-day period, closing on January 28, 2002.

The Final EIS must also be distributed to federal agencies with jurisdiction by law or special expertise, state and local cooperating agencies, environmental regulatory agencies, and those requesting copies.

Not sooner than thirty days after the Final EIS is published, a Record of Decision can be prepared. This is a written record explaining why the lead agency has taken a particular course of action, identifying what the action is, and the mitigations the agency is committing to.